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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1041  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3061  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2446  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000970

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN (GORKOWSKI)

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: KYRGYZ OPPOSITION PREPARES FOR LOCAL ELECTIONS,  
BUT HOLDS OUT LITTLE HOPE

REF: BISHKEK 897

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Classified By: A/DCM Robert Burgess for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary. Leading Kyrgyz opposition parties are actively contesting the October 5 local council elections, especially in Bishkek, but several party leaders told us that they do not expect to win more than a few seats. Opposition parties complained of administrative pressure and other obstacles, and claimed that opposition parties would take 75% of the vote in a fair election (at least in Bishkek). Of three party leaders we met, one emphasized cooperation with the current government, whereas the other two identified sparks that might rally the people against the government. The latter two also blamed the United States for democracy's failure in Kyrgyzstan, and criticized the United States for being too close to the country's current leadership. The Embassy plans to field election observers on October 5. End Summary.

#### Party Election Plans

12. (C) The official campaign period for Kyrgyzstan's October 5 local council elections has begun, and candidates are running either individually or on party slates. Opposition parties are actively preparing for the local elections, but claim to hold little hope of gaining more than token number of seats, and show no signs of presenting a united front. Poloff met with Bolot Alymkulov, a party activist for Ak Shumkar; Shamshibek Utebaev, the recently elected leader of the Erkindik party; and Asiya Sasykbayeva, an Ata Meken activist, Director of the NGO InterBilim, and "deputy-speaker" of the shadow public parliament. Each of the three parties plans to participate in local elections, with varying degrees of organization and a focus almost wholly on Bishkek. (Note: There are no local elections in Osh, Kyrgyzstan's second biggest city. End note.)

13. (C) The parties' strategies for gaining seats vary: Erkindik plans to submit only a party list with one candidate for each of Bishkek's eleven districts, while Ata Meken plans to submit a longer list of 25 candidates, and Ak Shumkar, a short party list with a greater number of "sleeper" candidates in case their party list is disqualified. Ak Shumkar's Alymkulov believed that the security services would know candidates' party affiliations, but reasoned that it would be administratively more difficult to block multiple independent candidacies than one party list. None of the parties anticipated winning more than a few of the 44 open seats in Bishkek, but claimed that in a fair election, opposition parties would take at least 75 percent of the vote.

#### Government Interference Backstage

14. (C) Opposition parties and press reports indicate active government interference in the election process. Sasykbayeva reported that two promising young Ata-Meken candidates had been successfully pressured to drop their candidacies or else lose their jobs. Alymkulov reported that the Central Election Commission (CEC) required that each candidate have separate election funds, which would prevent parties from spreading limited funds across the pool of candidates. The most highly publicized case of government interference involves Ishenbai Kadyrbekov, an ex-MP, whose candidacy the CEC rejected because the Interior Ministry failed to certify

that Kadyrbekov does not have a criminal record. (Note: The election code does not require either individual candidate election funds, or candidate clearance from the Interior Ministry. End note.)

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#### The Only Wonks in Kyrgyzstan

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15. (C) Erkindik leader Shamshibek Utebaev, at the helm of his party since April, claimed a party membership of 35,000. He characterized his party as neither pro-government nor opposition, and said that Erkindik members would neither take government positions, nor protest in the streets. Rather, his party's goal was "just to work." Unlike other non-government parties, Erkindik has a wonkish policy agenda -- solar energy, English and Chinese language training, and cheap housing -- and Utebaev was most animated when talking about cooperating with the government. He dismissed other opposition parties and particularly the opposition's public parliament, claiming the latter was a "last resort" for ex-government officials. Utebaev echoed government optimism about energy supplies this winter, but cautioned that "disaster" awaited the country if no corrective action were taken to resolve the energy shortage.

#### Join the Socialist Revolution!

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16. (C) Both Sasykbayeva and Alymkulov spoke passionately about the need for another "revolution," and identified numerous potential sparks, beyond winter electricity outages, that might contribute to popular unrest: closed schools, high food prices, and widespread popular disgust with Ak Jol, the president's party. In our separate meetings, each attributed President Bakiyev's announcement that Ak Jol would not field any party lists in the local elections to his recognition that association with Ak Jol would sink a candidacy. (Note: An alternative explanation is that this step would limit embarrassing intra-party squabbling. End note.)

17. (C) While both Sasykbayeva and Alymkulov quoted Lenin on revolutions, they blamed the United States for the failure of democracy in Kyrgyzstan and cited as evidence our continuing assistance to the government and our failure to denounce the current parliament as illegitimate. In particular, both compared the Embassy's strong response to a direct economic threat -- the destruction of a security fence around the Hyatt Hotel (see reftel) -- with what they characterized as the U.S. Government's tepid response to the hijacking of last December's parliamentary elections.

#### Comment

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18. (C) The opposition's revolutionary rhetoric appears to lack resonance among the population. Plus, with most opposition heavyweights bought off, scared away or lying low, opposition party prospects appear limited in the October 5 elections. The most interesting facets of the election will likely be the degree to which the government reacts to a non-existent threat, and the potential revelation of cleavages within the ruling Ak Jol party. One rumor circulating around Bishkek is that the new Bishkek mayor, who led the charge against the Hyatt fence, has endorsed a separate set of candidates than the one approved by the Ak Jol leadership. Embassy plans to field observers in the Bishkek area on October 5 to monitor the conduct of the elections.

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